



## Department of Health and Human Services

*Administration For Children and Families*

*Region V*

Illinois • Indiana • Michigan • Minnesota • Ohio • Wisconsin

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Helene Nelson, Secretary  
Wisconsin Department of Health  
and Family Services  
1 West Wilson Street  
P. O. Box 8916  
Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8916

Dear Secretary Nelson:

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (WDHFS) recently completed a review of Wisconsin's Child and Family Services program to ensure substantial conformity with the State plan requirements found in Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The review began in November 2002 with an analysis of data related to safety, permanency, and well-being of children involved with WDHFS and a statewide assessment of areas critical to the effective functioning of the State's child welfare system. During the week of August 18, 2003 a joint Federal and State team conducted a review of 50 cases and interviewed numerous key stakeholders in the child welfare system. The final report of the review is enclosed.

We appreciate the time and effort that you and your staff committed to the planning and implementation of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). While this was a joint effort, we would like to thank especially Kitty Kocol, John Tuohy, Mark Campbell, Michelle Rawlings, Barbara Berlin, and the staff in Milwaukee, Kenosha and Outagamie counties and in Madison for taking responsibility for this review.

The State can take pride in those areas found to be strengths in its child welfare system. We have determined that Wisconsin is operating in substantial conformity in three of the seven systemic factors that have an effect on the State's ability to help children and families to achieve positive outcomes.

We have determined that the Department is not operating in substantial conformity in six of the seven outcome areas and in four of the seven systemic factors. A Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is required to address each outcome and systemic factor determined not to be in substantial conformity. Please submit the PIP to our office for approval by April 14, 2004.

A penalty of \$1,428,465, in federal financial participation, is applicable to this level of non-conformity. This amount is an estimate. The actual amount of the penalty will not be determined until Wisconsin has submitted its final claims for Federal Fiscal Year 2003. We are suspending the withholding of funds associated with this penalty during the period of the approved PIP. If we determine that the State is successful in rectifying any of the areas that are in non-conformity, either through successful completion of the PIP or through a subsequent review, we will rescind the withholding of Federal funds associated with those areas.

Our staff will assist in developing the PIP to ensure that WDHFS establishes a strategy for bringing each of the identified areas up to a level of substantial conformity as specified in Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 1355.35. To the extent possible, those persons involved in the CFSR planning process and members of the review team, including those who are not employees of WDHFS, should be involved in developing the PIP.

In accordance with the CFSR Procedures Manual, the major elements of the PIP include the priority assigned to the State's work on each area of non-conformity, identification of the individuals responsible for carrying out the various steps, the identification of the geographical areas of the State where you will make efforts, and the establishment of time frames for carrying out the improvements. We will work with your staff to determine timeframes, specific content, and the process for evaluating progress and achievements.

45 CFR 1355.37 requires that the State make available for public review and inspection all statewide assessments, reports of findings, and PIPs developed as a result of a CFSR. Therefore, we suggest you consider how WDHFS will respond to inquiries concerning these documents and prepare to make the information available. Since the information is available to the public, ACF is obliged to respond to the information as well.

The State may enter into a voluntary PIP to strengthen any areas that were determined to be in substantial conformity. We will be happy to discuss the provisions for developing a voluntary PIP at your request.

In accordance with 45 CFR 1355.32(b)(2)(ii), we will begin the next full CFSR of WDHFS two years after approval of the program improvement plan. Patris Shirrells of our staff will contact your staff to discuss the development of the PIP. Please be assured that we will continue to work with you to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Joyce A. Thomas  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

cc: Kitty Kocol, Administrator  
Division of Children and Family Services

Joan E. Ohl, Commissioner  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families

Susan Orr, Associate Commissioner  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families

Diann Dawson, Director  
Office of Regional Operations, ACF

Pam Carter, Director  
Office of Public Affairs, ACF

Kevin Keane, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs  
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